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A CONSIDERATION OF AWARENESS AS THE ESSENTIAL
" ELEMENT IN INTRA-INTER-PERSONAL CHANGE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
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" "
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This dissertation, written by

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to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THESIS

The thesis of this dissertation is that *awareness* is the key factor in effecting change in persons. It is not implied that awareness is the only factor involved in effecting change; merely that it is the *pivotal factor* (the single non-variable) in the process of change. It is the assertion of this writer that *awareness*, though not synonymous with change, is the *essential element* in the process of change; and that change never occurs without awareness, though awareness does not necessitate change.

DEFINITIONS

Awareness refers to the *event of perception* at any given here-and-now moment via the five senses, or thinking, or emotions--experience of being 'in touch with' reality.

'Event of perception' refers to and includes both conscious and unconscious experience of being. Persons experience the reality of existence via senses, thinking and emotion: consciously and/or unconsciously. Though total experience is included in this definition of awareness, the thrust of this dissertation is toward affirming *conscious awareness* as therapeutically preferable to unconscious awareness. However, a case for both is vital to any process of growth, change and any therapeutic endeavor.

Paul Tillich¹ understands the reality of human existence as experienced in awareness of self *in the event of* existing. That is, awareness is ontologically present in any existential moment. This is the primary uniqueness of man. He is conscious of his being. He experiences psychic distance. He is self-transcendent. Thus, to define man in terms of awareness is to affirm that his experience of self inherently includes some degree of conscious awareness. In this dissertation, therefore, the case for conscious awareness as vital to growth and change in the therapeutic process, is not of movement from totally unconscious awareness to complete conscious awareness; rather, from the already-present reality of partial conscious awareness toward increased awareness in consciousness. Therefore, when the question 'What is awareness?' is posed, the answer is discovered in the ontological nature of man: i.e. awareness is the existential event of perceiving self in the context of his environment.

When is awareness? Though it may appear as obvious that awareness occurs only in the here-and-now, it is vital to consciously note this, since the thrust of this dissertation assumes here-and-now as the context within which growth and change occur.

What is the function of awareness? Tillich, referring to man, says: " . . . he has become aware of the fact that he himself is the door to the deeper levels of reality, that in his own existence he has

¹Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 62ff.

the only possible approach to existence itself."² This refers to the ontological capacity of man to be in touch with the reality of experienced event in the here-and-now. Thus, the primary function of awareness is to put man in touch with his own existence. To say this more concisely, "Reality is identical with experience."³ Awareness, then, is the conscious or unconscious *experience of reality*.

Chapter II will deal extensively with the intra-inter-personal nature of man and Chapter VI extends the discussion into the conclusions of this dissertation regarding awareness. It is, thus, necessary at this point to offer only a brief, preliminary definition. Intra-inter-personal identifies man as ontologically structured to function within a system of existence which is at one point of focus 'intra-personal,' and at the other 'inter-personal.' These are the two foci composing the complimentary components of the self-system.

In Chapter III the nature of change will be examined and again, all that is necessary here is a brief, preliminary definition of change as used in this dissertation. Change refers to an altering of behavior, attitude or emotions; thus, to an altering also of an individual's style of functioning in relation to other beings and to his total environment. One distinction is to be noted regarding the three modes of human experience (behavior, attitude, feeling); namely, that though a person is always able to select his behavior and attitude, he does

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, I, 42.

not have the capacity directly to choose emotions. This does not diminish the importance of environmental influence upon a given individual, but affirms each individual as the final decider regarding his own behavior and attitude. Feelings (emotions) are natural results of the events of life, including other person's choices of their own behavior and attitude. Neither does this imply that one cannot effect change in emotions. Behavior and attitudes can be chosen which tend to produce change in feelings. The key distinction is that behavior and attitude are in direct control of one's choosing, while emotions are, at best, altered only via changes in behavior and attitude: i.e. they are only indirectly accessible in terms of specific change. In a context of deliberately attempting to produce growth and change in persons, this has important implications: primarily, that change occurs within the realization that (1) a person feels what he feels, but (2) a person may choose what kinds of behavior and attitude he will embrace.

DELIMITATIONS

Though a variety of ontological assertions regarding the nature of man could be explored, my primary focus is man's intra-interpersonal nature. The rationale for this limitation is not only to note the impossibility of handling additional aspects of man's ontological nature in one paper, but secondly (and primarily) to lay a basis for certain conclusions regarding the nature of man as he participates in contemporary institutions and therapeutic ventures which

define growth and change as primary goals.

Throughout this dissertation, both directly and indirectly, my use of Tillich and Gestalt Therapy is pervasive. Though numerous other persons and schools of thought in both theology and psychology might be appropriate, reference is made in this dissertation only to the views of Paul Tillich in the theological realm and those of the Gestaltists (particularly Perls) in the psychological. Tillich and Perls consistently present congruent views regarding their basic understanding of the nature of man in the process of growth and change. Gestaltist viewpoints, in the psychological realm, and Tillich in the theological realm, having most informed my understanding of man and the nature of therapeutic endeavor, form, therefore, the primary rootage out of which the following chapters are written.

It should be clearly understood that, although unconscious awareness and change are recognized as significant, they are not the primary focus of this dissertation. The focus here is on the specific kind of conscious awareness and change which lays a basis for therapeutic models which deliberately attempt to increase the possibilities for (and rate of) change. This is the rationale for using the expression 'essential element.' Thus, awareness is the essential element in the process of change. Suggesting that awareness can be either conscious or unconscious implies that change occurs continually within the context of unconscious awareness, and does so without specific efforts on the part of persons or institutions deliberately effecting change. Therefore, existence itself implies interaction between self

and environment and at least unconscious awareness with resulting changes occurring. In stating this thesis, posing definitions of awareness, intra-inter-personal, and change; and in writing this dissertation, primary focus is ultimately concerned with persons and institutions consciously involving themselves in a deliberate effort to effect growth and change in persons. A case can be made for the validity of such processes by contemporary persons and institutions, for, that growth and change which are already, ontologically, occurring within persons, can be encouraged and guided toward wholeness by deliberate, conscious effort.

CHAPTER II

THE ONTOLOGICAL NATURE OF MAN

Any theory of personality refers to a particular set of ontological assumptions about the nature of human existence and, therefore, about *how* man functions. It is assumed that each human consciously or unconsciously, has such a basis upon which he operates. This is true whether in a therapeutic setting or any other interpersonal context. Assumptions about inter-personal dynamics determine and characterize what is believed about the individual-interpersonal structure of being, identity as 'self,' the nature of freedom or self-determinism, self as worthwhile, the nature of how change occurs, and the views one holds regarding meaning and values in living.

The sequence of issues discussed in this dissertation is organized on the assumption that each new assertion grows out of the assumptions of previous chapters: i.e. the nature of freedom, responsibility and change are rooted ontologically in the nature of man as intra-inter-personal; that the nature of wholeness is rooted in the previous assumptions about the nature of freedom, responsibility and change; and that awareness as key, including conclusions regarding models for inducing change and growth, arise automatically from all previous assumptions.

INTRA-INTER-PERSONAL

Man, ontologically, lives within an intra-inter-personal

context. The nature of being human includes two systems: (1) an intra-personal system of being, and (2) an inter-personal system of relationship. Actually, these systems are viewed as two aspects of the same, *whole* system--inseparable, interdependent, complementary; and distinguished by the above labeling only for purposes of clarity.

The individual process of fulfilling one's ontological nature (i.e. his intra-inter-personal structure), occurs via an *integrative process*: a balanced functioning of these two aspects of existence. A person does not exist apart from his *relatedness* to other persons. It is both inadequate and inaccurate to describe the nature of man only as 'I' and miss the 'I-Thou'; only as 'me' and lose the 'we.' Man's identity is extremely blurred, if not completely absent, if defined only as individual. His method of origin, biologically, seems to insist that, just as he was not conceived outside 'we-ness,' neither can he live in separateness and isolation. His nature, therefore, is 'community.' So the ontological nature of man is here defined in terms of a multiple system of being: i.e. as intra-inter-personal.

Any consideration of change is necessarily rooted, ontologically, in the intra-inter-personal nature of man. Thus, the above paragraph states the assumption on the basis of which change is later discussed.

PROCESS

Existence is an 'integrative process.' The word 'process' is used deliberately to describe human 'being' because it accurately defines man's functioning. He does not exist apart from functioning,

moving, thrusting toward. It is true that one can, at any given moment, take a picture (as it were) of 'self,' or experience 'self' in what seems to be a static state. However, such a picture of self functions similarly to video-taping stop-action in a sport event: it freezes action for the moment, but does not represent its nature. Perhaps it can be stated as follows. Man is not perceived accurately apart from a continuum of becoming: e.g. I am not 'me' apart from a double immediacy of (1) where I just *came from* and (2) where I am *going* in the next moment.

Thus, this intra-inter-personal, co-system, identified as 'human,' is a *process* rather than a static entity. Common dictionary definitions of the word 'existence' use the expression 'continuance in life.'¹ The 'ing' basicness of what it means to *be* is impressive. It is, therefore, out of such an understanding, that man's ontological nature is perceived as process, as movement, and as a continual *flow of being*.

POLARITIES

Discussion of polarities is also directly rooted in the ontological nature of man as intra-inter-personal. Each individual lives within an experiential continuum which functions as a need for balance between (1) 'being separate from' and (2) 'being intimately with' other persons. Because of man's intra-inter-personal, ontological

¹Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1953.

nature, he is not whole when experiencing either excessive distance or excessive closeness for extended periods of time. In the experiencing of either extreme, he loses meaningful contact with one aspect of his ontological nature. The following diagram illustrates:²

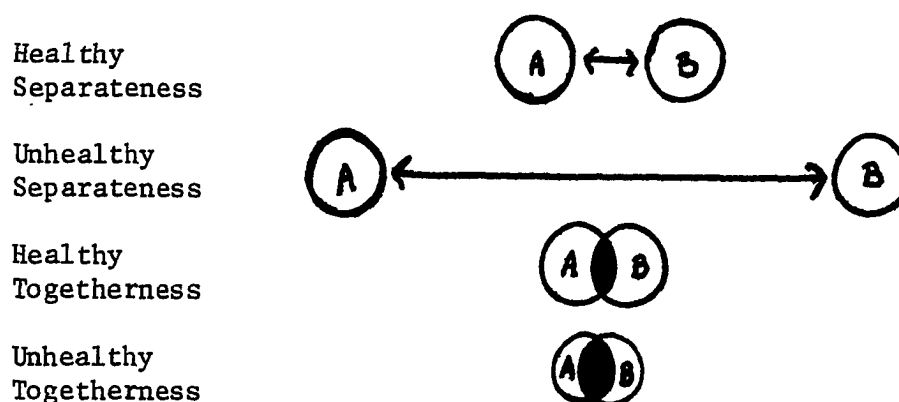


Figure A

Gestalt therapists recognize the polar nature of man within the context of his intra-inter-personal needs. Levitsky and Perls conceptualize it as "the rhythm of contact and withdrawal":³

Following its interest in the totality of life processes, in the phenomena of figure and ground, Gestalt therapy emphasizes the polar nature of vital functioning. The capacity for love is impaired by the inability to sustain anger. Rest is needed to restore energy. A hand is neither open nor closed but capable of both functions. The natural inclination toward withdrawal from contact . . . is not dealt with as a resistance to be overcome but as a rhythmic response to be respected.⁴

²For further elaboration of the above diagram in terms of the nature of growth and actualization, see Chapter IV, p. 35ff.

³Abraham Levitsky and Frederick S. Perls, "The Rules and Games of Gestalt Therapy," in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd, editors, *Gestalt Therapy Now* (Palo Alto, Ca.: Science and Behavior Books, 1970).

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 147.

Perls functioned in the therapeutic process with primary focus, methodologically, upon *integration* of a client's experienced polarity. The technique most frequently employed was one of dialogue in which the client experienced and verbalized both sides of the dialogue, moving alternately between two chairs.⁵ The theoretical basis for his integrative method of therapy is defined and elaborated in several major writings on Gestalt therapy.⁶ Though the actual therapeutic process in this form of therapy is basically an intra-psychic function, the reality encountered is an individual's perception of his self in relation to his environment, and his responsibility for his own response to his intra-inter-personal context of existence. The polarity is experienced as tension between self and one of the disowned expressions of self, between self and one of his own projections, between self and environmental support, and between the demand for attention to the present figure-need in the integrative process and the emerging figure-need within the figure-ground continuum. Thus, it is evident that the intra-inter-personal nature of man is the basis of both theory and techniques in Gestalt therapy.

Tillich, in the language of philosophy and theology, affirms the same reality as Perls and other Gestalt therapists. The

⁵ Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Workshop, Long Beach, Ca., 1968.

⁶ Frederick S. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (Lafayette, Ca.: Real People Press, 1969); Frederick S. Perls, *In and Out of the Garbage Pail* (Lafayette, Ca.: Real People Press, 1969); Frederick S. Perls, *et. al.*, *Gestalt Therapy* (New York: Dell, 1951); Frederick S. Perls, *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (New York: Random House, 1947, 1969); Levitsky and Perls, *op. cit.*

intellectual concepts and accompanying word symbols of both Perls and Tillich, are expressions of the basic intra-inter-personal nature of man. Each of them identifies any human state of 'being whole' as possible only within the context of a willingness to *risk*: either excessive distance or closeness. In Gestalt therapy, the individual risks in a process of dialogue with one's disowned expressions of self. In Tillich's language, the individual risks loss of 'being' in choosing "the courage to be."⁷

Tillich's specific analysis of polarities is stated as follows:

Three outstanding pairs of elements constitute the basic ontological structure: individuality and universality, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny. In these three polarities the first element expresses the self-relatedness of being, its power of being something for itself, while the second element expresses the belongingness of being, its character of being a part of a universal of being.⁸

An additional specific quote is key to Tillich's perception of ontology; an assertion which clearly establishes his view of the polar nature of existence as similar to that of Perls and other gestaltists. Tillich, like Perls, understands the experience of existence to be one of a subject-object dichotomy, rooted in the environmental-self polarity as follows:

⁷Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

⁸Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 165.

The ontological question presupposes an asking subject and an object about which the question is asked: it presupposes the subject-object structure of being, which in turn presupposes the self-world structure as *the basic articulation of being*.⁹

It is precisely at this point that Gestalt therapists assert, both in theory and practice, that the flow of being moves continually from incomplete to complete gestalts (figure-ground phenomenon) in a process of *integration*. Such integration is of the self-environment polarity, neither one nor the other exclusively dominant, but a both-and experience: i.e. awareness of tension between self and environment. This is the polar nature of being.

In Tillich's three pairs of polarities, the first elements of individuality, dynamics and freedom, are descriptive of a central thrust in Gestalt therapy. For instance, within the individuality-universality polarity, individuality is affirmed. Gestalt therapists emphasize affirmation of individuality in saying that "Health is to move from environmental support to self support."¹⁰ Such movement implies one is 'in tension with' one's world. Further, the emphasis on self-support is substantiated by Tillich in his stating that "The self, having a world to which it belongs . . . logically and experientially precedes all other structures."¹¹ Thus, the self is ontologically prior to the world to which it relates.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 164.

¹⁰ Perls, Gestalt Workshop, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 164.

To focus on the element of 'dynamics' in the dynamic-and-form polarity, is to remain consistent with the Gestalt concept of experiencing being as a flow toward integration rather than as static.¹²

On the 'freedom' side of the freedom-and-destiny polarity, Gestalt therapists, in theory and practice, affirm the 'capacity to choose',¹³ one's behavior and attitude.

The second elements in Tillich's three pairs of polarities, are also descriptive of and consistent with Gestalt concepts. First, on the 'universal' side of the individual-and-universal polarity, Gestalt therapists see man as non-existent apart from the context of his world. Man is not man apart from awareness of his *otherness* in relation to his environment.¹⁴

On the 'form' side of the dynamics-and-form polarity, gestaltists confirm the reality of structure and function as existing simultaneously. Being does not exist outside the context of time and space.¹⁵

The 'destiny' aspect of the freedom-and-destiny polarity is seen by Perls as identifying the reality of man's limits--his *finitude*. One of Perls' most obvious and vital thrusts in his style of therapy

¹²*Ibid.*, I, 165; Perls, Gestalt Workshop, *op. cit.*

¹³Perls, *ibid.*

¹⁴Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 165; Perls, Gestalt Workshop, *op. cit.*

¹⁵Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 165; Perls, Gestalt Workshop, *op. cit.*

is a central focus on "acceptance of reality"¹⁶--the reality of one's *here and now* experiencing self-in-world. He, therefore, discourages "shoulding"¹⁷ self, which is actually a tyranny of reality-denial.

Finally, the word '*and*' in each statement of polarity needs to be noted. The ontological reality is individual *and* universal, dynamics *and* form, freedom *and* destiny. Both elements of each polarity are simultaneously the *reality of being*.

In this chapter the central intention has been to define an ontological basis for following chapters, particularly to form a frame of reference for creating relevant models of therapeutic endeavor and Christian community as they offer help and health to persons.

Within the scope of the intention noted above, an attempt has been made to identify that man is, ontologically, interpersonal by nature. Further, man can be understood most accurately from a phenomenological point of view. It is from such an assumption that wholeness includes and is consistent with man's experience of polarities. Man's thrust toward wholeness, growth, change, and being, is a *process*, created precisely by his polar experience of existence. His polarity comes to focus most dramatically and urgently, and is lived out primarily in the relation of self to other selves. Pathology or health, as the case may be, is an expression of the particular balance of an individual's co-system of functioning. A person's degree of

¹⁶Perls, *ibid*.

¹⁷Perls, *ibid*.

wholeness correlates, thus, with his ontological, polar nature. The diagram on page 10 illustrates how one's degree of health is determined by the balanced flowing between 'being with' and 'being separate from' (particularly the extent of distance) other persons.

Finally, it is accurate to affirm that Tillich, in the realm of man's philosophical and theological nature, and Perls in man's psychological nature, arrive at similar understandings of man and his functioning in given degrees of health and/or un-health. Thus, this chapter has established a basis for specific models within our culture in the 'helping' process.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY AND CHANGE

Man is essentially *free to decide* what attitudes and behavior he will select in his functioning because freedom is rooted ontologically in man's structure of being. Thus, the locale of man's deciding and acting is experienced and occurs within the context of intra-inter-personal relationship. The reality of human *freedom* is one of the primary objects of 'awareness' in the process of change. The central thrust of this chapter is to demonstrate how being responsible for attitudes and behavior, automatically and simultaneously, emerge from man's freedom. Chapters I and II have established freedom as an aspect of the *givenness* of man's nature. Responsibility and the possibility of change are inherently implied. The process of change is discussed within the above assumptions. The context of change, then, is *awareness* of (1) freedom and (2) responsibility.

THE NATURE OF FREEDOM

First, man, consistent with his ontological nature of being, is a center of energy and initiative. He is capable of creating. Put in first-person language: my existence, my 'I am,' is capable of self-movement. I am obviously limited physically, mentally, and environmentally, by my ontological structure; i.e. by the structures through which self must find expression. The circumstances, structures, and events introduced by a person's world and by others in

his world, form the ontological limit or finitude-element of the polarity of experience. Essentially, however, this side is experienced within the ultimate factor of *self-determination*.

It is important to clearly note that man is *un*-limited in his choice of attitudes, even at points of ontological and environmental limitation. Further, it is clear that man not only possesses the freedom to select behavior and attitude, but also the power to act out such decisions. The capacity to be responsible for self is inherently a part of man's self-determination. However, in experiencing behavior and attitude, each individual is ultimately responsible for himself, not for the choices of other individuals. Each person is responsible for his own behavior and attitudes within the context of his own being, identity and freedom.

Second, looking briefly at self-determinism (freedom) from the Gestaltist viewpoint, James Simkin says:

It is important to note that it is the organism itself which picks and chooses, chews and swallows, etc., and not the significant other out there who determines for us what is palatable, nourishing, etc.¹

The above statement suggests that each person is not only capable of selecting behavior, but able also inherently to know what behavior is nurturing. This implication moves far beyond the freedom to choose behavior and attitude. It implies that man knows what he really needs to choose in order to grow as a person. Such comprehensive

¹James S. Simkin, "Introduction to Gestalt Therapy," p. 4.

freedom is assumed in Gestalt therapy, and is interpreted by this writer as consistent with Tillich's view of man's ontologically rooted 'courage to be.'²

THE NATURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Stated again in the first-person: I am self-determining. I choose *all my behavior*. I am the creator of my attitudes and behavior. I am their author. I, therefore, need to take responsibility for what I do. And since I sometimes select behavior which is destructive, non-productive and non-integrative, I experience *guilt*. Real guilt is the condition, in a given moment, of being non-integrative or split, with my intra-inter-personal balance arranged in such a way as to deny part of my being. Usually this occurs via games in which I present a phony picture of my real self.

Though real guilt or blame-worthiness should be taken seriously if one takes the process of freedom seriously, to just *feel* guilty is a game. To seriously feel responsible is one matter; to carry around and nurture *feelings of guilt* is another matter. Guilt 'feelings' are rationalizations. They are ways of saying, "I am not the kind of person who would do that." But I am that kind of person. I did it. It must be consistent with who I am. That was my choice. Therefore, I *am* guilty. But I may do nothing to eliminate the feelings of guilt

²Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

in order to maintain a phony image of innocence. The alternative is to face honestly the fact that I did it with full freedom and responsibility.

THE NATURE OF CHANGE

Awareness: Change is rooted in, and can occur only within, the intra-inter-personal system of being human; only within the framework of what *is*. There is one primary factor which permits change because it releases the decision-making process. This key factor which permits change is awareness. Change becomes possible via a process of becoming aware, i.e. experiencing the nature, and urgent thrust-need, of the 'flow process' known as *life*. This life-process is experienced as a need to continually move between self and others, between intra and inter-personal being.

The most central human awareness is of one's intra-inter-personal nature. Functionally, however, being self-aware is the starting point; to be in touch with self is to experience the capacity for making contact with other selves. But this affirmation can be misleading, for, just as man's nature is both intra and inter-personal, this double awareness can only be discovered and known *together*, simultaneously. Change occurs via awareness within a context that nurtures both dimensions of one's system of be-ing. Note, however, that change may not automatically occur in a fulfilling direction. Some 'other' being must first be in touch with his *self* in order to make contact with others, or change possibilities are extremely

limited. Stated in terms of the concept of polarities, the most central focus of *awareness* is necessarily on the nature of man's being as (1) his separateness and (2) his unity. This duality need is continually experienced in intra-inter-personal relationship with other selves.

Here-and-now decision-making: Change occurs only in the here-and-now. The same reality applies to the event of awareness. Any given moment of awareness is of one's self in the *now*. To be in touch with 'self,' therefore, is to know the reality of one's immediate existence as worthwhile, to be aware of one's center of being, to be in an 'o.k.' position of genuine self-acceptance and knowledge that one *is worthwhile*. Therefore, to grow is to move closer to one's *center of being*, toward an integrated self. The frequent problem for humans is that they have no integrated self; no center of being. Therefore, when man is out of touch with his 'center,' out of touch with his ontological polar nature, he is unable to function adequately in the use of his freedom. This, in turn, creates the illusion that one is 'helpless,' that others or one's environment determines the choices one makes, and that, therefore, he is not responsible for his behavior. Thus, the significance of emphasizing the centrality of here-and-now as the time-space arena of all being and all change, is clearly defined.

Purposive: It is assumed in the above paragraph that all change and behavior are purposive, selected by 'self' for reasons which

may or may not be conscious. The ontologically grounded function of all behavior and change is to obtain affirmation of self as worthwhile. Thus, even though man's specific behavior, change, attitude, may be destructive or non-productive, the ontological intention and motivation underlying such behavior, is good; i.e. affirming the worth of self, and demanding such affirmation from others.

Flow: It has been stated that awareness permits decision-making and is, therefore, the 'essential element' in change. Such aware decision-making is a process of 'dying and rising'; of 'letting go' and 'catching hold'; of moving from incomplete to complete gestalt, and then from another incomplete to complete gestalt, continuing the ontological need for integration. The process is one of releasing self from holding on to present attitudes, ideas, or behavior, and thus, freeing energies for grasping new attitudes, ideas, and behavior. To illustrate with use of the physical walking process, one cannot commit energies to putting weight on the right foot without releasing the commitment to one's weight on the left foot. Thus, the flowing process of change is one of changing the point of where energies are invested. The process is one of accepting the reality of one's present energy investment, thus to be prepared to re-invest in alternative attitudes, ideas or behavior. The thrust is toward integration of one's self-system and thus toward wholeness. In Tillich's language, lack of "courage to be"³ is the most common human resistance to this

³*Ibid.*

growth process of life.

Part and whole: Phenomenologically, the starting point in viewing the human organism, is as a whole. Therefore, any change occurring in *one* part will effect change in the total organism. This truth can be observed in the psychosomatic functioning of the human organism. For example, awareness and change in the body affect and alter the functioning of the emotional and mental aspects of being. The reverse order is also true. Change in attitude effects change in the body. The primary assertion for purposes of understanding the change process is that *structure* and *function* are identical. Change one and you change the other. In this regard, it is possible to affirm many approaches to therapy, whether they place primary focus on change via the body or on change via the mind. Probably the most significant distinction among therapies is a functional difference; a matter of efficiency in the use of energy and time.

No-change-change: The primary application of this view of change is intended to focus on (1) the secular therapeutic process, and/or (2) the nature of the growth of persons in Christian community. In both secular, therapeutic endeavor and growth-oriented activities of the church, many common assumptions about the nature of change and growth have, in this writer's judgment, been largely misunderstood. This misunderstanding is rooted in a widespread lack of clear understanding of the ontological nature of man, especially of his freedom and the resulting consequence of being responsible for self. The

framework from within which a 'no-change' philosophy of therapy and growth will be made, is the assertion that, ontologically, a person *is who he is* at any given moment. This has vital significance in a therapeutic process when a person disapproves of his own behavior, attitude or feeling. For, whether or not one likes what he is doing or feeling, he nevertheless *is where he is*. That is the reality of his *existence*. Even though one may wish to change, he is, however, unable to use his capacity for change until he is willing to choose at this moment to *be who he is*. The following analogy illustrates the reality of this pivotal truth: the energies being used by a foot in the act of pressing the accelerator of a car while the wheels are spinning deeper in mud, are not available for other purposes. Though one might have a goal of arriving at a point down the road, he cannot arrive there without, paradoxically, removing pressure from the accelerator. The first step toward resolution of the problem is to deliberately stay where one doesn't want to be, in order to free energies to go for help. The relevance of this analogy to the process of change is that change can occur only when the here-and-now reality of one's existence is affirmed rather than denied. Willingness to be where one is, is a prerequisite for exercising further choices of behavior and attitude. Such willingness is to *be*--that is, to *accept* where one is *as the starting point* for change or growth. To do so is acceptance of reality rather than denial of reality. Denial immobilizes all possibility of energies being available for change. The primary and most usual expression of the petrifying experience of

denial is expressed in phrases like, "I don't like being this way," "I don't want to feel this," or "I shouldn't do that." It is not suggested that one should like the uncomfortable feelings of conflict and negative behavior. Rather, it is suggested that no change is possible if energies at a given moment are being used to focus on the discrepancy between where one is and where one would like to be.

The view of change expressed both above and in the quotes below, is valid for therapeutic endeavor and for growth processes in the context of Christian community. Assuming the validity of such an assertion, it would be worth applying to contemporary issues involving religion, social action, and the whole struggle of our generation for the meaning of being human.

As implied in the title of this section, it is suggested that any automatic assumption that 'doing psychotherapy' or establishing 'growth experiences' implies *changing*, is less than accurate. In order to focus pointedly to the primary premise regarding change, two excerpts from Douglas Q. Corey are quoted below:

Traditional formats establish an implicit, if not explicit, dichotomy between therapist and patient such as: abnormal and normal, neurotic and (charitably) less neurotic, teacher and student, wise and unwise, and so forth. The traditional formats of therapy imply that the patient is in a state that he should not be in and that therapy will help him get into some other state in which he will be better off. In essence, traditional formats of psychotherapy are formats of *change*, regardless of the type of therapy. The contradiction between accepting a patient as he is and curing him, i.e. changing him, has largely been ignored. The problem of the patient is not that he needs to *change*; his problem is that he cannot accept himself the way he *is*. To invoke a therapy of change not only unwittingly plays into his defense system, but

actually recapitulates the childhood experience wherein he was constantly told that it was not good to be the way he *was* and that he should *change* and become some other way (i.e. good, clean, noble, wise, efficient, healthy, orderly, etc.); by implication, well-adjusted or normal.

. . . a patient must be what he is, if he is to become what he could be. The basic task of the therapist is to get the patient to be what he already is *now*. Only in the crucible of the here-and-now can creative and emergent forces operate and the patient experience a true rebirth. What the patient might become beyond the point of being what he is in the here-and-now is none of the therapist's business; Nor can it be his business; he has nothing to do with it as a therapist because growth is creative, emergent process and a law unto itself, never a product of a therapist's manipulations.⁴

In a therapist's relationship with his clients, therefore, to focus on the time-space setting of here-and-now, is the primary frame of experience for the therapeutic process. To do so permits an intensive awareness of the fact that only the 'now' of a given encounter is available to either the client or the therapist. This suggests that therapists should be extremely reluctant to focus on anything which has occurred in the past or which is anticipated in the future. Rather, focus should be on present feelings *about* those past or future events. At any given moment, the most valid materials for therapeutic endeavor are feelings, thoughts, response to present events and present memory of past events. Even dream material or unresolved issues with persons chronologically past are dealt with by creating present dialogue. The purpose is to operate within the ontological reality of being human. Thus, direct confrontation in the *now* permits

⁴Douglas Q. Corey, "The Use of a Reverse Format in Now Psychotherapy," *Psychoanalytic Review*, LIII:3 (Fall 1966).

integration of self.

Everett Shostrom⁵ speaks of "trusting yourself in the here and now." Most Gestalt and existentialist therapists affirm that (1) the present is the sum of the past, and (2) the present includes the intention of the future. These statements regarding the nature of therapy and the here-and-now focus, imply that the goal of therapy is to change one's *perception of reality*. Thus, therapy focuses on *awareness* as the key⁶--awareness of two basic aspects of reality: (1) freedom and (2) responsibility.

It is suggested, therefore, that *change* might or might not occur in the therapeutic context; and whether it does or not, is not the primary concern. The primary concern is that of creating and nurturing an awareness which includes *the possibility of change at any moment* the client so desires *and* chooses. Even such awareness cannot occur to any significant degree unless a person is also aware to some extent of where he is in the here-and-now. Awareness of the *possibility* of growing must necessarily begin with the awareness of where one is *now*. Thus, therapy or growth situations at best only set the stage for possible change. In institutional Christianity, the lack of recognition of the nature of change has been tragically absent. The organized church has lost touch with persons by focusing either

⁵Everett L. Shostrom, *Man, The Manipulator* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), chap. 6.

⁶See chapter V for further discussion of awareness as 'key.'

on the past in the form of 'what's wrong with persons' or on the future in the form of 'how persons should be.'

In addition to the above, one other observation is important to note regarding the change process. A person's energies are not available in the present for purposes of creating awareness while focused on either the past or future. This is not to diminish the significance of either the past or the future in a person's life. Rather, it is to affirm the reality that change can only occur *now*. The diagram below illustrates this present vs. the past and future truth.⁷

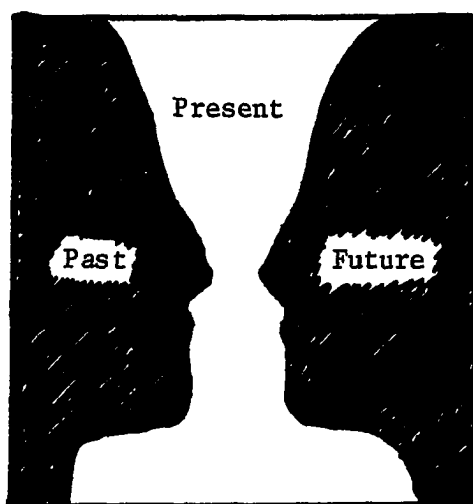


Figure B

This well known figure-ground sketch illustrates that one cannot directly experience the *now* while energies are focused on past or future. In the sketch, via eye-sight, one can demonstrate the

⁷Source of this famous textbook figure unknown to me.

impossibility of focusing sight energies upon either past or future simultaneously with the present. The reverse is also true. This sight analogy accurately illustrates the similar impossibility, in the process of the time-space context of change and growth, of offering adequate therapy when energies are primarily focused on the past or future.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF WHOLENESS

Any definition of wholeness must necessarily be grounded in the ontological nature of man. In Chapter II, assumptions were defined, stating that ontologically, the nature of man is wholistic via a process of the integration of polarities. Thus, personal health and fulfillment are obviously the consequence of a functional balance of polarities: i.e. of intra-inter-personal relationship to self and others.

Further, it is evident that wholeness is only possible within the context of a person's willingness to use his ontological capacities of freedom and responsibility. The degree of wholeness occurs in direct ratio to one's degree of conscious awareness of his capacity to choose behavior and attitude. And, thus, the extent of such awareness permits actual choices to be made. Perls says: "I have faith in nature--if you let it be."¹ He would not define that statement as a mandate to avoid either therapeutic endeavor or deliberate personal growth activities. Rather, it is an affirmation that wholeness is ontologically experienced as man's basic need. Man's being automatically thrusts toward wholeness. A therapist's primary purpose is perhaps very adequately symbolized by the concept of 'maieutic': i.e. in a mid-wifeing function of drawing out the growth and potential

¹Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Workshop, Long Beach, Ca., 1968.

wholeness in persons.²

WORTH AND EXISTENCE

Previously, reference was made to the self as a particular arrangement or integration of the process (co-system) of being. It is of significant importance that even if the style of one's personal form of integration is a *dis*-integrative process: i.e. moving in a splitting direction, it is, nevertheless, still a 'self.' The 'I' still exists. It is alive. Therefore, the 'I' is inherently *worth-while*. To 'be' is to *be*. Or, to be, *is*! Existence in itself is ontologically worthwhile. The idea of *non*-existence implies 'no value.' Thus, when a person functions in ways which tend to dis-integrate his nature, he experiences a separation of the co-systems known as 'self.' He experiences splitness; an absence of self-unity. This is an experience of partial non-being, or at least movement toward non-being. Under these conditions it is easily possible to lose touch with one's worth. This is true precisely because a person's existence *depends upon* keeping ultimate separation from occurring within one's ontological structure. This is why death is so frightening. It implies total loss of integration.

Underlying the temporary difficulty one might have in consciously getting in touch with *self worth*, is the awareness, though possibly unconscious, that one has not really lost knowledge of it.

²*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1953.

Each human being *knows* he is worthwhile. He knows it precisely *because* he exists. To experience one's 'existence,' (to be self-aware) *and* to experience self as 'worthwhile,' are the same, identical and simultaneous experience. An analogy of this truth written in first-person might be expressed as follows: "To experience weight is to weigh. I weigh 150 pounds. I experience myself as 150 pounds. One hundred fifty pounds is my existence. I experience my existence. One hundred fifty pounds is 150 pounds is 150 pounds. My existence is my existence is my existence. 'A rose is a rose is a rose.'³ I am what I am. So I experience my worth in the experiencing of my *self*." The key problem persons usually have regarding self-worth is again related to the ontological structure of being human. To be specific, on the interpersonal side of one's self-system, "I know my worth, but do you?" A very large quantity of a person's energies can be used in desperate demand that others recognize the obvious worth implied in one's existence. And, even wide ranges of destructive or dis-integrative behavior and attitudes are choices ontologically aimed toward demanding such recognition.

AFFIRMATION

Humans *know* they are worthwhile, but need, by nature, affirmation of that reality. Thus, they may choose every kind of imaginable behavior or attitude to force others to recognize and affirm the truth

³Perls, *op. cit.*

about their existence. At this point, self-worth is labeled as *the pivotal focus* of all behavior. Self-worth is the central reality of 'being.' This is true because it is experienced simultaneously with the nature of one's identity.

The logic established above is that (1) existence is ontologically a double-sided system (intra-inter-personal), (2) identity is connected inherently to that ontological nature, and (3) self-worth is rooted automatically in the *fact of existence*. Therefore, self-worth is known in the experience of *both* aspects of being. It is no wonder, then, that one might have problems, if another 'self,' the *inter*-side of being, does not affirm one's *existence-worth*. To affirm the worth of a person is love. It is to acknowledge one's being; and since worth is not separable from existence, when one is affirmed or cared for, or even given negative attention, his worth is being affirmed, even via negative affirmation. This reinforces identity as having *worth*.

VALUES: RIGHT AND WRONG

Right and wrong, good and bad, meaningfulness and meaninglessness, fulfillment and emptiness, health and sickness, and any additional ways of referring to *ultimate meaning and values*, are also rooted ontologically in the intra-inter-personal nature of man.

'Value and meaning' does not primarily refer to a moralistic, static way of defining good and bad. These words are not labels for any particular kind of behavior. They, refer, instead, to the given

status of the inter-intra-personal process of being: i.e. to the degree of balanced fulfilled functioning of this co-system. Value and meaning are, therefore, defined as inherently coinciding with, and occurring in direct ratio to, the degree of intra-inter-personal wholeness. It follows, then, that any style of living, with given choices of thinking, behaving, feeling, and relating, has higher fulfillment (positive value) in direct ratio to a person's level of *self-other awareness*.

Life is meaningful, therefore, to the extent that one perceives it and lives in touch with his 'communal nature.' Specific behavior, thought, and ways of relating to self and others, are 'positive' if they affirm life, nurture awareness of one's intra-inter-personal nature, create awareness of freedom to decide, and lead to responsible loving and caring. If they limit or destroy the above, life is less meaningful. This search for meaning is man's lifetime process, continually occurring in the context of other, similar, selves.

MEANING: WHOLISTIC

Meaning: The human organism is known accurately only if viewed as a whole. This is particularly true regarding the meaning of existence. To explore the nature of anyone of many aspects of man is valuable, certainly, but should never be generalized into ultimate conclusions about the nature of the whole. The key to meaning grows out of the process of *integration*. It is a matter of viewing all

aspects as ingredients of the whole--a whole known via the process of integrating the intra-inter-personal system. The whole determines the parts, not the reverse. The goal determines the method. The ultimate meaning determines the nature and structure. Assuming it is possible to speak of ontological assumptions as existing in chronological sequence, the prior-to-all-other assumptions is the *assumption of meaning*. Meaning exists first; then the intra-inter-personal structure is established. It's primary purpose is to thrust man toward that meaning. Thus, meaning is defined (1) in terms of the *whole*, and (2) is the first ontological assumption.

Growth and Actualization: Out of man's need to experience a balance of his self-system comes the process of growth and actualization. This growth process is a process of self-actualization which is experienced as 'polarities.' These polarities are experienced as closeness and distance, as aloneness and togetherness, as separateness and intimacy. Such movement is that of *flowing*, not only in the intra-personal aspects of one's self, but an inter-personal *flow*; a tide-like movement between self and other selves. The process of self-actualization, wholeness, or health, is rooted in the nature of man, and requires the development of both individuality *and* togetherness. These aspects are complementary; two sides of the same coin. Both individuality and togetherness are possible without loss of identity. Such wholeness is known in 'togetherness,' when one remembers and knows the possibility of 'separateness' (not being merged completely);

and is known in 'separateness' when he remembers and knows the possibility of 'togetherness' (not being isolated and cut off). This description of both aspects of the flow between individuality and togetherness, is the ontologically rooted truth of man's basic need to be who he is. Therefore, man is whole when he experiences the tide-like polarities of his own existence and discovers that he does not lose his identity in either too much distance or too much merging. He knows identity in the secure coming and going, in and out, flow of relationship.

Humanness: To be fully human, like being whole, is to be intra-inter-personal, free yet limited, responsible yet needy--a flowing process, continually pushed by nature toward the humanness of becoming and belonging. Thus, wholeness, meaning, and humanness, are all discovered in the balance of the self-system; a balance of dependence and independence, oneness and uniqueness, *all simultaneously*. Thus, to be whole is to be fully *human*. Further, to experience a relatively high level of integration of self, is to experience such key characteristics as aliveness, joy, celebration, and perhaps symbolized most inclusively by the common word 'dance.'

Integration: Gestalt is a German word which means 'whole' or 'configuration.' A dictionary of psychology defines it as: "... an integration of members as contrasted with a summation of parts."⁴

⁴Howard Crosby Warren, *Dictionary of Psychology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934).

In Gestalt therapy as developed by Perls, he asserts, even in the identifying label, 'gestalt,' that the nature of wholeness results from a certain patterning of integration. However, the process of integration usually occurs only after one works through an experience known as 'impasse.' The following quote from Ruth Cohn states how the nature of the 'impasse' is key to a gestalt approach of developing wholeness via integration:

The skillful separation of conflicts into their duality and their subsequent reenactment leads, after a series of dialogues, to feelings of blankness, confusion, helplessness, etc. This experience is the *impasse*: the ultimate expression of two strivings pulling in opposite directions. The therapist's guiding words are: 'be blank,' 'be confused,' 'be empty.' When the patient can endure and experience the extent of his feelings of confusion, blankness, impotence, etc., organismic change takes place. It is the theory of this impasse phenomenon which I regard as Perls' unique and most important contribution to psychotherapeutic practice. It has helped to improve the efficacy of psychotherapy, both in depth and in speed, in an exhilarating and fruitful way.⁵

The nature and process of moving toward health, is ontologically experienced, either consciously or unconsciously, as an automatic thrust which cannot be created by persons. However, the natural process of movement toward wholeness can be aided in therapeutic and growth ventures by persons choosing to become involved in a process of giving and receiving help.

In this chapter, the focus has included several key issues which are the most significant parts of the nature of wholeness: worth

⁵Ruth C. Cohn, "Therapy in Groups: Psychoanalytic, Experiential, and Gestalt," in Joen Fagen and Irma Lee Shepherd, editors, *Gestalt Therapy* (Palo Alto, Ca.: Science and Behavior Books, 1970), p. 137.

as inherent in the fact of existence, the need for affirmation, a consideration of meaning of values as rooted in the need and degree to which integration of polarities can occur, a phenomenological starting point, an understanding of the simultaneous occurrence of health and full humanness, and the necessity of working through the impasse toward integration of self.

CHAPTER V

AWARENESS AS KEY

AWARENESS

Need for awareness: The rationale for claiming awareness as *the key factor* in the change process, is based on evidence that awareness, more than any other human experience, functions as *the essential element* in effecting change or growth. In addition, it seems evident that awareness is key to change because it is simultaneously the primary source of motivation in human experience. The ontological need and rationale for the key position of awareness in man's nature, is so obvious that it's significance is easily overlooked. Awareness causes a triggering of the organism's capacity to be more fully in touch with the possibilities of freedom and responsibility in man. It then permits motivation to mobilize the carrying out of this freedom and responsibility in specific choices of behavior and attitudes.

The basic significance of awareness as 'key' relates to the separateness of man from his environment; i.e. his polar nature in experiencing the individuality and universality, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny. Man's ontological polar nature is experienced as psychic distance, self-transcendence, as the capacity to be aware of self as object. Therefore, to experience one's polar nature is to automatically experience awareness. Awareness is key, then, in that it arises simultaneously out of the experiencing of one's own being.

Tillich said: "Being a self means being separated in some way from everything else . . ."¹ Thus, the presence of awareness defines man as human. Without awareness, man would not be man. The value in and purpose of deliberately increasing awareness is to thrust man toward coping with the threat of complete separateness. Thus, Tillich² understands the courage to act upon one's awareness as a response to the existential anxiety of non-being.

Yes-No-Flow: Jerry A. Greenwald, another Gestalt therapist, states the nature of this need for awareness of one's potential separateness or the polar tension. He speaks in terms of a 'Yes-No-Flow.' First, his initial statement regarding 'organismic flow':

A person will spontaneously function in a healthy, self-integrating fashion when he responds to the on-going flow of his needs. This is his 'self' seeking expression, nourishment and growth. 'Organismic flow' is this unfolding of needs throughout the life of a person. It is the intrapsychic manifestation of his unique identity. The well-being of the individual depends on his awareness of his 'organismic flow' and his responsiveness to it by effective and appropriate actions.³

The ontological experience of one's polar nature is, in Greenwald's language, tension between a yes and no response to the integration need. He says:

¹Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 170.

²Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

³Jerry A. Greenwald, *The Art of Emotional Nourishment* (Beverly Hills, Ca.: 1969), p. 1.

A healthy organismic flow involves a feeling of awareness of one's identity and a 'yes' pattern of responsiveness to it. Equally important is a 'no' attitude to what is alien to one's identity. In this process awareness is the spark plug which activates the person's energies in the direction of maintaining and enhancing his well-being and growth. Through awareness of his choice of actions he finds *what* behavior patterns are nourishing and toxic, and *how* he activates both his nourishing and toxic responses. He learns to use his potentials in evolving those modes of functioning which are most harmonious with the uniqueness of his identity and organismic flow. With sufficient awareness of this vital process the individual discovers (or is confronted with) the reality that he is the central, active force determining the gestalt (whole) of his personal existence. He is then able to commit himself to taking responsibility in maintaining his organismic health and growth.

A relative lack of continuity of awareness means that he is less able to respond to his needs and will experience greater stress on his organism.⁴

Existential Anxiety: A further way of viewing the nature of 'awareness as key' in relation to man's polar nature, is in terms of existential anxiety. Tillich⁵ points to the fact that man experiences ontological fear. This is not fear in the commonly understood sense as related to a specific event or circumstance. It is anxiety about the possibility of *not existing*. It is logically obvious that, if one is aware of 'being,' he is also, automatically aware of the possibility of 'non-being.' This, again, is rooted in his ontological separateness from the rest of his environment.

It is precisely at this point, again, that Gestalt therapists

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵Tillich, *The Courage To Be*; Tillich, *Systematic Theology*.

perceive the same reality as does Tillich. The primary statement of this truth is perhaps from Perls: "Anxiety is the tension between the 'now' and the 'later.'"⁶ To experience the tension between now and later is identical to the experience of existential anxiety: i.e. to experience the tension between 'being' and 'non-being.' And, the 'courage to be,' even while experiencing the tension, is the same experience as 'to integrate' in Gestalt therapy.

AWARENESS AS THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

Awareness is the 'essential element' because it is the primary process whereby man knows his own being. The central focus of awareness is always on the nature of 'being.' The nature of being is a given. And, at this point one can see the relevancy of Tillich's view of revelation.⁷ A primary implication in the idea of revelation is also that it is a *given*. A person's receiving of this 'givenness' of being is experienced most directly in the event of *awareness*. This key assertion is that awareness refers to an *active receptive process*, not merely passive receptive. Even unconsciously, the human being *responds to* self and his environment. Whether awareness is seen as 'essential element' in a theological sense like the concept of revelation, or is seen in a humanistic, experientially centered focus in the sense of awareness of *now*, the importance of this

⁶Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Workshop, Long Beach, Ca., 1968.

⁷Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 106ff.

'essential element' phenomenon in relation to change is significant. This is true primarily because the givenness of awareness is experienced simultaneously as both 'revelation' and the experience of the existential 'now.'

BEING INDIVIDUAL

Identity: Words like identity, self, I, and me, refer to man's nature as *individual*, but actually include one's *inter-personal* aspect; that part of one's structure or particular process of being which includes the degree of total integration. At a given moment of existence, identity might consist of either an effective or ineffective integrative process. In either case, it is still a 'me,' and carries the label 'individual.' 'Individual,' then, is the 'I-label' referring to the co-system defined previously.

Characteristics: Further, the 'I-label' refers to or has in any given moment of one's being, three aspects: (1) characteristics of being which offer continuity of identity because they are generally the same in *this now* as in the *now* of a minute ago, or even five years ago; (2) characteristics which are new, evidence of the 'I-process' not previously present, but present now, indicating movement, direction, and thrust; (3) characteristics which are present and perceived in the form of a double-direction: past and future.

Self-conscious: To be human is to be self-conscious. Though this truth is obvious, it is extremely significant and worthy of

special attention. The 'I' is aware of existence. Described in first-person, "I experience 'me.'" I experience myself as both subject and object; thus, I can create abstractions to refer to me, like the word 'I' or 'me,' or 'self.'

There is another way of speaking of 'individual identity,' namely, phenomenologically. Identity, self or I, is experienced as a *whole*. The 'whole' refers to integrative arrangement in one's here-and-now, with predominate focus on the 'foreground' or 'figure,' to use gestalt imagery.

NEED TO BE

Becoming: Another characteristic of self-identity is experienced as 'I need to be.' Actually it is more accurate to say 'I need to become,' for it is only in *becoming* that 'I am.' Moses' confrontation with Yahweh, asking God's identity gets to the point: i.e. "I am who I am" or "I am becoming,"⁸--one is who he is at any given moment. The description at this point is intended to affirm a person's *identity* as tied ontologically to the 'process' known as 'wilbur,' for instance; and to suggest that one's need to be is a need to *continue in existence*. Thus, the need is to be *alive*. Identity is *toward life*: "A rose is a rose is a rose."⁹ Again, the language of first-person is most clear: "I am! I *just* am!" This is one's affirmation of being;

⁸Exodus 3:14.

⁹Perls, *op. cit.*

one's deepest need; one's identity; one's ontological structure.

Structure and function: In the above paragraph it is assumed that one's ontological structure *and*, 'how' one functions *and* identity, are all synonymous. 'The medium is the message' is a fairly adequate expression which is analogous to this truth. This, in the form of a specific analogy, would mean that the word 'chair,' for instance, refers to both its structure *and* its function--simultaneously. And this is also its identity. There is no more--a chair is a chair is a chair. And that's enough!

Authenticity: To be authentic is to offer one's be-ing. One may play games at times: i.e. present ways of functioning for the purpose of making others think his intra-inter-personal style of integration is, at that moment, something other than it actually is. However, even to function in a 'game-style' *is* who one is at that moment; a person offers who he actually is, even if the 'self' offered exists in some degree of in-balance or non-integration. This means one presents his *real self--always*. The self presented may be an incongruent self, but it's one's real identity.

Access: Still another way of describing identity is in terms of here-and-now. 'Here' locates one physically at any given moment in his existence and 'now' *is that moment*. Here-and-now are inseparable. They are the only access man has to self, and the only access others have to him. Thus, identity is always the existential, immediate,

perpetual process of moving toward integration of one's being. Again, as God said to Moses, 'I am.'¹⁰ Therefore, all any person can offer another is his 'I am.' Most anxiety is actually the experiencing of 'here and now' denial; the tension between 'I am' and 'I shall be' or 'I was.' This is consistent with the previous discussion regarding existential anxiety and its rootedness in man's ontological, polar nature.

KEY TO REALITY

Finally, then, the thrust of this chapter and the primary focus of the dissertation is to claim *awareness as the essential element* in consciously effecting change and growth in persons. Awareness is, thus, the essential element also of freedom, responsibility, and meaning--i.e. the degree of health experienced in a person at any specific moment. This is the reality of existence.

Further, awareness is the *essential element* in the sense that 'acceptance of the now-reality' is the starting point for acceptance of the 'two selves.' Perls calls the polarity at this point 'top dog' and 'under dog.'¹¹ James Simkin describes Perls' categories and then, speaking of the need to integrate polar selves, says:

The integration of these selves--the full acceptance of how one is, rather than how one should be, leads to the possibility of change. As long as people persist in

¹⁰Exodus 3:14.

¹¹Perls, *op. cit.*

remaining split and not fully acknowledging (taking sides with and experiencing) what and how they are--real change I believe--is impossible.¹²

Awareness of this possibility of change is the *essential element* in exerting change, rooted ontologically, in awareness of the possibility of the integration of one's splitness. It is at this point--the specific reality of that possibility--that awareness is most *key*. Thus, in either a therapeutic setting in the 'secular' sense, or in a growth setting within Christian 'community,' awareness is urgently necessary if the natural growth and healing processes inherent in human nature, are to be increased.

¹²James S. Simkin, "Introduction to Gestalt Therapy," p. 9.

CHAPTER VI

HOW AWARENESS OCCURS

How does awareness occur? As implied in stating that awareness is ontologically rooted in human experience, it is important to note that awareness occurs *automatically as the events of existence occur*. However, this does not imply that any particular degree or level of conscious awareness is inherently present. Though awareness exists and is known via the five senses, thinking, and emotions, *consciousness of such awareness* may be quite limited. It is implied, therefore, that the degree to which conscious awareness is limited, is in direct ratio to the possibilities for growth and change.

One of the conclusions regarding *how* man functions in his living, is expressed in the belief that life's relationships include, ideally, the following three categories of relationship: (1) long term relationship where commitment is a permanent covenant that is continually sustaining in a flow of giving and receiving; (2) short term relationship in which great depth might occur, but one which may terminate within hours or days; and (3) renewal relationship situations in which the primary focus is to 'catch up,' to bring again into being a previous relationship. The nature of being implies that a person has within himself the capacity to develop adequately in self-other awareness; that he can have instant depth relationship; and that he can move in and out of relationship. A well developed capacity to be in touch with all three categories of relationship suggests health in

self-other awareness. On the other hand, if a given person knows only short-term relationships, and has an absence of more permanent commitments, he lacks, to a great degree, health in self-other awareness. Or, even if one has a permanent commitment, but lacks the other two categories of relationship, his health as a person is very seriously limited.

In introducing the central thrust of this chapter, it is suggested that the primary arena within which awareness occurs in human beings, is in one's relationships with other persons. This intentionally implies that any imbalance or lack in the primary categories of relationship, directly limits possibilities of increased awareness, and thus growth and therapeutic endeavor. On the health side of the coin, a fullness of experiencing the three categories of relationship implies the increased possibility of health and success in therapeutic endeavor and growth of Christian community. Thus, in this chapter, I shall relate the concept of *change through awareness* to the process of living as person-in-relationship-with other persons, including the specific areas of therapy and Christian growth.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Tillich, in defining the polar nature of existence, identifies the 'individual' or 'self' as *affirming self* in the act of willing participation in one's world, including participation 'with other selves.'¹ He says:

¹Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), chap. 4.

The courage to be as a part is the courage to affirm one's being by participation.²

In addition to the above statement, Tillich sees the centrality of individual wholeness as related to the ontological nature of persons as self-in-relationship-with-others. He says:

The more self-relatedness a being has the more able it is, according to the polar structure of reality, to participate.³

This lays the logical ground for perceiving that 'Christian community' might be a logical concept for growth and health which should be consistent with the ontological nature of man: i.e. individuals who know their individuality in terms of being a part of and commitment to 'community.'

The ontological nature of man is identified in both *intra and inter personal* terms. However, the presence of *self*-awareness in individualized physical existence causes the primary and most dominate emphasis to naturally center toward the 'individual' side of the 'intra-inter' nature of man. This points to the truth that, although the nature of man is a balance of both inter and intra personal, the actual nature of *contemporary man* is more 'individual' in his functioning than in previous history. It is intended that this statement refer, not only to man's style of functioning within culture, but to his ontological nature.⁴ The context within which every human person

²*Ibid.*, p. 90.

³*Ibid.*

⁴John Cobb, *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957).

is formed is certainly 'interpersonal.' But it is only within that context of 'community' that man lives out his life in terms of *individual* being and choosing; *individually* free and responsible for his behavior and attitude.

John Cobb says: "The Church is the Church to the degree it shapes the individual."⁵ He sees the nature of contemporary Christian existence primarily as that of 'individualized existence,' although he affirms the polar nature of man in defining 'community' as the context within which individual man finds significant shaping as Christian. The individual-within-community nature of man is emphasized, believing it sets the stage for structuring Christian community so as to affirm (1) man as primarily experienced as individual, but (2) never experienced apart from the context of others. This defines the ontological rootage of authentic Christian community.

Upon the above assumption regarding the nature of Christian community, I return to the idea of 'maieutic.' The function of 'mid-wifing' or drawing out personal growth and potential is an accurate way of describing the *functional* nature of being Christian community.

THE CASE FOR THERAPEUTIC ENDEAVOR

Self-directed vs. Environmental Directed: The need for therapeutic endeavor roots in the same ontology as the defining of

⁵ John Cobb, class notes, Spring, 1970, School of Theology at Claremont.

wholeness and health. That is, the fact of man's self-awareness (his self-world dichotomy) implies the need for therapy in that, to be aware of other as other than self, and self as other than other, is to raise the question, "Which determines which?" If man were not self-transcendent, the question of whether 'self' or 'environment' determines behavior would never be raised; for there would be *no* ontological self-other awareness.

Since man is aware of self as both object and subject he, therefore, raises the question of responsibility for *health and pathology*. He raises it in terms of either: 'Am I the one who selects my behavior and attitudes?' or 'Is my behavior and attitude determined by my world?' This establishes, therefore, a line of reasoning which would suggest that: (1) individuals are influenced by the environment in which they live, but that (2) the individual is the final (free, responsible) decider of his behavior and attitude, and, therefore, (3) the nature of therapeutic endeavor is rooted, ontologically, in the same setting as described in the nature of Christian community: i.e. primary focus on the individual *within the context of* his world. Thus, neither one extreme or the other is ontologically sound. Rather, recognition of the polar nature of man with final decision invested in the individual, is necessary. The question, then, is not one of environment *versus* self, but of both-and.

This sets the frame of reference for raising questions about structuring therapeutic endeavor. Assuming, therefore, the need for an approach which is ontologically sound, one would create a

functional, therapeutic situation in which self-other awareness could be nurtured. Why? Because awareness of this polar nature connects one to the *now* reality. And to do this is to automatically put man in touch with the knowledge that he has the freedom and capacity to choose--to make decisions. To the degree that man lacks conscious awareness, he seems to unwittingly select to turn his decision-making capacity over to his environment. This, then, creates an illusion that man's environment, rather than his self, is the decider of his behavior and attitudes. This, in turn, creates the functional illusion that one is neither *free nor responsible* for what he does. And, under such illusion, man is extremely limited in knowing wholeness and health as a human being. Thus, the case for deliberately becoming involved in the process of creating awareness within persons, is for the specific purpose of aiding the natural, ontological thrust of growth: i.e. to set the stage for *change*.

Self-acceptance: Awareness permits self-acceptance. The degree of self-awareness is the direct determinor of self-acceptance, and therefore, health and personal wholeness. The task of self-acceptance is the difficult one of aiding persons in accepting the reality of the here-and-now: i.e. to accept *how* one is behaving, whether positive or negative, comfortable or full of conflict. Gestalt therapist, James Simkin, describes the therapeutic task within the context stated above:

My primary psychotherapeutic task, as I see it, is to help the person I am working with accept himself. My patients say to me in effect, 'I want to change how I am.' 'I don't

like myself when I act this way.' 'I'm so stupid,' and the like. Yet they expect to change how they are--not by fully experiencing their behavior and thus their discomfort, embarrassment, joy, humiliation, excitement, pleasure, shame (feeling); by judging their behavior as 'bad,' 'stupid,' 'unacceptable' and the like (intellectual judgments) and thus talking about rather than fully coming in contact with what they do and how they do it. And, paradoxically, these people will be the first to claim the organismic truism that 'we learn from experience.' They confuse 'thinking about' with 'experiencing.'⁶

Therefore, the therapeutic endeavor calls for both awareness of self in context of environment *and* acceptance of self at that point of reality.

Integration vs. analysis: It should now be obvious, in light of the previous assumptions of this thesis, that the process of therapeutic endeavor, ontologically, calls for a procedure which would focus, primarily, on a process of the integration of one's experiencing the polar nature (self-world) of his being, rather than a process of intellectual analysis. It is at this point that Gestalt therapy, in both theory and practice, is consistent with the polar nature of man's being.

The above statement does not diminish the significance of intellectual understanding of one's degree of splitness or integration, as the case may be. It merely identifies the *primary focus* of therapeutic endeavor as aiding persons in a process of subjectively (self or individual side of the polarity) experiencing integration. Only

⁶James S. Simkin, "Introduction to Gestalt Therapy," p. 8.

after such experience occurs to any given extent, is intellectual 'talking about' valuable. The futility of 'talking about' as the primary focal point of therapeutic endeavor, is rooted in the ontological reality of man's experiencing self-transcendence; i.e. subject-object or self-world dichotomy. To focus dominately on the intellectual process is to play into the *already painful awareness* of one's finitude. The primary need is to integrate via a process of consciously aware, self-world acceptance.

AWARENESS TECHNIQUES

To be quite specific in discussing the *how* of creating intra-inter-personal awareness, I have listed a limited, yet representative, number of techniques and principles used in a typical Gestalt therapeutic process, as an indication of how the assumptions of this dissertation look in specific therapeutic endeavor. The expressions below are common ways most Gestalt therapists label a number of the 'rules' and 'games.' More extensive descriptions of these techniques than below, have been written by Levitsky and Perls⁷ as well as others; and, the following are based on the summation by Perls.

RULES

1. '*Here and Now*': Only the present exists; even the remembering of the past or anticipation of the future is experienced in the *now* (present).

⁷Abraham Levitsky and Frederick S. Perls, "The Rules and Games of Gestalt Therapy," in Joen Fagen and Irma Lee Shepherd, editors,

2. '*What and How*': *What* are you experiencing now? *How* are you experiencing it? These two questions allow you to get in touch with the present reality of your existence.
3. '*I and Thou*': True communication involves sending and receiving. 'To whom are you speaking?' is asked when statements are directed to the wall or space in general.
4. '*It*' and '*I*' Language: You are encouraged to take full responsibility for yourself. For example, instead of saying 'My voice (it) is trembling,' change 'it' to 'I,' with 'I am trembling.'
5. '*Awareness Continuum*': This relates to becoming immediately aware of 'how' you are experiencing and away from endless talking about, explanations and interpretations.
6. '*No Gossiping*': This encourages being in touch with feelings rather than avoiding them. Talk to others directly, not *about* them.
7. '*Asking Questions*': Change questions into statements. Questions often indicate passiveness or dependence on others rather than taking responsibility for yourself.

GAMES

1. '*Games of Dialogue*': When conflict exists between two aspects of yourself, you may be asked to play both parts (Perls' top-dog and under-dog) and create dialogue within yourself.
2. '*Making the Rounds*': This technique asks you to express a particular feeling to each person in the group, helping you to get more fully in touch with your *now* experience.
3. '*Unfinished Business*': We often stop awareness and do not face and resolve resentment or other feelings. You may be asked to finish such incomplete experiences.
4. '*I Take Responsibility For*' or '*That's OK*': A game of saying what you experience and adding 'And I take responsibility for it' or 'It's ok to be this way right now since that's *how* I am *now*.'

Gestalt Therapy Now (Palo Alto, Ca.: Science and Behavior Books, 1970).

5. '*Playing Projection*': A game in which you may be asked to *be* the other person and thus experience *how* he experiences himself.
6. '*Reversals*': Be what you fear. For example, if you are timid, act like an exhibitionist. This puts you in touch with a disowned part of yourself.
7. '*Rhythm of Contact and Withdrawal*': We each need both to 'be separate from' and 'with' others. Opportunity is given for you to live out both of these aspects of experience.
8. '*Exaggeration*': If your hands are shaking, let them shake more and more. A game in which you are asked to affirm what you are experiencing rather than to control (deny) it.
9. '*May I Give You A Line*': A game in which the therapist may ask you to try on a sentence for size and see if it helps you get in touch with your 'here and now' experience.

EMPATHY, WARMTH, AND GENUINENESS

Techniques, like the above, are validly useful as tools consistently rooted in the ontological nature of man; but techniques are not the only significant factors in creating awareness as the 'essential element' in change. Extremely important are the personal characteristics of the therapist. On this subject, Truax and Carkhuff say:

Research seems consistently to find *empathy*, *warmth*, and *genuineness*, characteristics of human encounters that change people for the better.⁸

Cozens⁹ and others have come to similar conclusions: namely,

⁸C. B. Truax and R. R. Carkhuff, *Toward Effective Counseling and Training and Practice* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

⁹Bill Cozens, *A Preliminary Report on the Feasibility of A Programmed Learning Experience as a Means of Facilitating the Counseling Effectiveness of a Group of Clergymen*, 1970.

that these qualities in persons, in any interpersonal context, whether therapists or not, are key factors in aiding the process of change. This seems to imply that persons who achieve a high degree of health, are themselves integrated, having inherently the capacity of being a positive influence in opening others to awareness and change.

Thus a person who is in touch with his own polar nature, and has developed enough awareness of his own being, to be fairly well integrated, is ontologically capable of meeting others within a therapeutic setting or Christian community growth experience--and to offer an automatic contagion of an intra-inter-personal, nurturing influence.

CONCLUSIONS

1. *A Model for Growth and Change in Therapy.* Since all endeavors by institutions or individuals working with other individuals, are automatically 'interpersonal' in structure, it is vital to develop models and methodologies in producing growth and change which are ontologically consistent with man's nature.

Thus, if the ontological nature of being human thrusts him toward the experience of wholeness and integration within the context of awareness of one's polar existence, then, the form or structure of endeavors should be in an 'interpersonal' context. This is most consistent with reality for purposes of growth and change. This calls for a minimum of at least one other person, and ideally a *group* as the most plausible setting for change. What kind of group? The rationale established in the first five chapters, suggests that a

particular approach to group therapy, which might more accurately be called '*individual therapy in a group context*,' is clearly consistent with the nature of being.

The primary rationale for the 'individual-in-group' context or model, rests upon the previously-defined assertion that primary focus is upon the individual's selecting his behavior and attitude, though in an inter-personal (self-world) context. Some persons have made cases for individual therapy as potentially most fruitful; others proclaim traditional group therapy. Although either traditional individual or group therapy is not to be judged as non-productive, it is evident that an 'individual-within-group' therapeutic setting is the more ontologically consistent format for change and growth. Such a setting structures itself as a mini-world; a setting which, in functional process, parallels the reality of being an individual human in the context of one's interpersonal world.

2. *A Model for Christian Community.* Though to some degree the church may offer opportunities for valid *individual* involvements which promote growth and change; and, secondly, though to some degree the church may offer opportunities for valid, large, mass involvements (such as public church services) which promote growth and change--*again as in therapeutic endeavor* (above, conclusion 1), the most ideal, productive model for growth and change in Christian community, needs ontologically to offer as its primary structuring of relationship, an 'individual-within-group' model.

3. *Helping Institutions and Wholeness.* Contemporary institutions will be successful in the 'nurturing of wholeness' ventures to the extent that they take seriously a model for growth and change consistent with man's ontological nature: i.e. 'intra-inter-personal.' This calls for structuring of inter-personal opportunities for growth and change which are consistent with man's 'individual-in-community' nature.

A careful examination of the contemporary church institution, as well as the other major institutional forms in our society, will reveal that their primary ineffectiveness and failure in efforts to produce human growth and change, are precisely because such efforts have not usually been modeled to be consistent with the reality of man's nature. They have tended to be modeled in either extreme: (1) emphasis on the *individual* aspect of the polarity to the exclusion of the community context, or (2) emphasis on the *community* side of man's polar nature to the exclusion of the individual.

The implications of this contention indicates, therefore, that, if the institutions and concerned individuals of our contemporary society are to be productive in promoting man's wholeness rather than contributing to the continued demise of being human, they must seriously study the nature of man; and hopefully, discover an increased and more conscious awareness of the intra-inter-personal nature of human existence.

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